

In the year 2003, a vibrant Greek democracy serves once again as an inspiration to its neighbors and the free world.

The recent apprehension of one of the 19 members of the November 17 terror group provides reassurance that Greece deals sternly and effectively with terrorists. That is one reason that in Greece this is considered as the trial of all trials. Certainly, there is every reason to welcome the fact that the group responsible for killing many people, including four American officials and a British general, is finally being brought to justice.

This significant contribution to the prevention of terrorism and Greece's membership to the EU will provide Hellenes with even greater stature.

The Hellenic American community shares a love of freedom, liberty, and individual rights. The friendship between our two nations is based on mutual respect, a commitment to common goals, and a sharing of fundamental values. Ties of blood and kinship also unite us. The modern community of approximately 3 million Greek Americans has established a natural and enduring bridge between our two nations.

Today, we take special note of these citizens and thank them for their many contributions to our Nation's cultural, economic, and political heritage. In the coming year we look forward to the preparations for the 2004 Olympics, which will take place in their birthplace of Greece. We also look forward to progress in the reunification of Cyprus.

The EU council said, "The EU strongly supports the continuation of the Secretary General's mission of good offices and of negotiations on the basis of his proposals." They continued that "it urges all parties concerned to spare no effort toward a just, viable and functional settlement and, in particular, the Turkish-Cypriot leadership to reconsider its position."

My desire is that this Greek Independence Day be the symbol of independence for all enslaved people. Zeto e eleftheria.

□ 1915

VACCINE INJURY COMPENSATION FUND

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, in the late 1980s, Congress passed a bill that established a Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund. It was supposed to be a nonadversarial fund that was to help children and their parents when they were damaged by vaccines.

We have found in the last few years that we have had a tremendous increase in the number of autistic children in America. We went from 1 in

10,000 children who are autistic to 1 in 200; and now many scientists and doctors around the world and in the United States believe it has been caused by mercury in vaccines.

There is a product in vaccines called thimerosal; and 50 percent of thimerosal, which is a preservative in vaccines, is mercury. Mercury causes damage to the neurologic system and to the brain; and yet we have been putting it in needles and then into our kids for many, many years, mercury which has a cumulative effect in the brain and does cause things like autism and other neurological disorders. Most parents do not know that.

When we established this fund in the late 1980s, there was a 3-year window when people could file if their children had been damaged by vaccines. Many parents with autistic children did not know about the fund until the 3 years had elapsed. We are trying to get that changed so these thousands and thousands of parents with autistic children have the opportunity to apply to that fund to get the kind of restitution that they need to take care of their kids.

Many parents have gone bankrupt, have lost their homes, have had to take extra mortgages to help with their problems, and the children are never going to be completely right. If Members saw the movie Rainman, Members know what I am talking about.

Mr. Speaker, each night I am coming to the floor and reading one of the thousands of letters I get from parents who have no place to turn except to the Congress.

This lady who wrote this letter is named Melinda Clark from Parma, Missouri. Here is what she writes:

"My family's journey down this road began a little over 3 years ago. The day of my son's diagnosis is permanently etched in my mind. I stood there frozen in the doctor's office almost as if time stood still, and I was instantly put on autopilot. It is still painful to go back to that time in my mind. It finally explained why my precious little boy no longer uttered my name or even looked into my eyes. Oh, how I longed to hear the words 'I love you,' but those were not going to come easily. It would take numerous hours of intense therapy to put together any sounds. With our backs against the wall, we immediately immersed ourselves into research and getting therapy treatment under way. While most kids his age enjoyed leisure time playing with toys and watching Sesame Street, my son began a time-intensive schedule of 40 hours a week of combined therapies. We started from scratch and had to first learn what exactly Nicholas knew and then work from there to fill in many gaps.

"As our research continued, I was quick to discover the use of thimerosal in many of my son's vaccines. Nicholas received his vaccines from both the county health department as well as the doctor's office. All in all, too much thimerosal was accumulated for his fragile immunity and nervous system. My investigation has been thwarted by the doctor's office from the beginning. As I began to put together pieces and find proof for my well-founded fears of mercury poisoning in my son, I requested the specific lot numbers as well as manufacturers' names for his vaccines in order to file a vaccine injury report. The doctor's office effectively stalled

me for many months before finally telling me that no specific records had been maintained. I could not believe my ears. This was their legal, not to mention ethical, obligation to their patients' safety and welfare. Without this specific information, I was never able to officially report the injury, but it is my sincere hope that through this letter my story can be told. Nothing can be done to undo the damage done to my son, but I pray that no other family will have to suffer at the hands of our ignorant use of mercury in these vaccines.

What sickens me even more is I worked in an environmental lab where we would test for this toxin in parts per billion, and no one ever mentioned to me during my son's vaccines that this toxin was being used as preservative. As an intelligent human being, if given the opportunity and knowledge of being told this chemical was contained in his vaccines, I never would have allowed this poison to be injected into my child.

Then it goes on and tells how horrible it was as she saw her child slip away from her and does not pay attention or look at her any more.

It is difficult for those who are not personally affected to understand or even acknowledge the truth. We have been trained from early on to trust in our government and follow all the guidelines set forth for vaccine safety. Like many others, I used to have that trust. Now my vision has been greatly blurred as the blame and acceptance of this issue has been set aside time and again. It is time for our country to step forward and do what is right. No other family should have to walk this stony path when it can easily be avoided by the complete removal of all mercury in all vaccines. The monetary loss of dumping these vaccines is a small price to pay. My son is now 6, and he is doing as well as anyone can expect.

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands of these children who have been damaged by mercury in vaccines, and here are a few pictures of some of these children. We need to adjust the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund to take care of these kids. We cannot leave them and their parents high and dry. It is absolutely criminal for this Congress not to deal with this issue.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TAX CUTS AND SPENDING PRIORITIES NEED NOT BE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, when the House considered the Republican budget last week, there was a lot of debate regarding whether the President's tax cut proposal was coming at the expense of other obligations, obligations to pay for child care, for public schools, college loans and nutrition programs that help children get a good start in life.